

288 thirteen looms, of which only ten were actually used, as the family
592 numbered at that time only ten adult men. The individualistic nature
of this work, however, in which no actual working together of several
individuals is involved, is reflected in the restricted *efakó* arrangement,
which comprises only a man and his young, as yet unmarried, sons. As
soon as the sons are married, they work on their own, although they may
continue to use the looms and tools which the family head had allotted
to them when they were still working in the *efakó* group. The *efakó* head
also supplies them with cotton thread for the start. When they are
fairly launched on their new individual work they have to buy their own
raw material from the proceeds of their work. Only the looms are still
regarded as family property, and are kept in repair or replaced if neces-
sary by the head of the household. In this case the individual worker
[427] pays the family head a regular 'rent' (called *lada*, lit. wages) of 2d. in
every 3s. which he earns with his work—an arrangement which clearly
takes into account the high cost of new looms. This arrangement, how-
ever, has been dropped; the young workers make themselves responsible
for the cost of repairs or the purchase of their means of production, and
the family head only receives occasional presents of food and clothing.
In a number of cases I found the *efakó*-unit still further reduced, and
even unmarried sons working on their own as soon as they reached the
age when tax had to be paid for them. The difficulty which many family
heads have to-day in providing tax money for a large family explains this
disintegration of the labour-unit. The steadily declining demand for
native woven cloth has been the main cause. In many houses looms
stand unused, because weaving is no longer profitable, and young men,
released from the *efakó*-unit, use their newly won leisure to turn at least
temporarily to other, more lucrative, professions. In one weaver's family
one of the three sons had given up weaving and become a messenger
in the District Office; in another family, two of the six sons became
[357] servants in houses of Europeans, and only one of the two returned to his
old profession after a number of years, having collected enough money
for his bride-price and for a new start in his former profession.

286 The individual weaver is free to plan his work independently, and
there are a number of different methods which he can adopt. The long
narrow strips of cloth which the Nupe looms produce are always woven
[804] to a standard length of ten *kperé*, i.e. arm's lengths, the weaving of which
takes five days. The most expensive, striped, cloth is then cut into five
strips of two *kperé* each and sewn together, edge to edge, to form the
complete *ede*, cloth, of the kind worn by women round the waist or as
kerchiefs over the head. It is reckoned that one man can produce three
to four lengths every month. The Nupe weavers work every day except
443 Friday, but much time is taken up in getting the cloth sold. A weaver
can entrust his goods to one of the brokers who have their shops on the
Bida night market; but nowadays this means a long wait—even if one is
lucky enough to get the cloth sold at all. Many younger men prefer
therefore to do their own trading, and wander through the villages, often
for three or five days, selling their cloth in village markets where there is
less competition both in native-made and European goods. One piece of

One piece of

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cloth of this expensive kind is sold for 4s. 6d.; as the cost of the material is 3s. 4d., the profit made in five days' work is 1s. 2d., or just under 3d. a day. If cheaper, plain material is used the profit is slightly smaller; the cost of the material for one piece of cloth is 1s. 6d., and the cloth is sold for 2s. 6d., six pieces being again produced each month, which gives a profit of 1s. per cloth, or 2d. a day. But instead of cutting up and sewing together the cloth in form of the *ede*, the weaver can also sell the full-length cloth as such to the cap-makers, or, better still, can make it into caps himself. A weaver can produce one cap (made of one *kpere* of cloth) each day, that is, twenty caps a month, allowing for two intervals of five days each for the weaving of the cloth. The white cloth caps, called *fula*, are very popular in Bida and are sold at prices from 9d. to 1s.; the cost of the material being 6s. 8d. the profit on twenty caps is thus between 7s. and 12s., or from 3d. to 5d. a day. It is interesting to note that this last kind of work, although more profitable and also in much greater demand, is nevertheless regarded as a slightly degrading occupation. *Fula* making, my informants pointed out, is tailor's work, and not the proper work for trained weavers; they undertake it, as they frankly admit, only in order to obtain money for tax or bride-price. In this respect, then, the dissolution of the *efako*-unit offers another benefit to the young members of the group who are out for quick money: for, relieved of their duties towards the head of the group, they are also relieved of their duties towards the ethical standards of the profession, to which the older men still cling.

In the villages only cheaper qualities of cloth, mostly native-dyed cloth, are produced; striped cloth which is sold for 1s. 3d., the material costing 9d. and the dye 3d., and plain indigo-dyed cloth (a kind of cloth that would find no buyers in Bida), sold for 1s. 9d., and produced at a cost of 1s. 3d. But even when the village weavers produce the same kind of cloth as the Bida craftsmen, they sell it cheaper, being content with a smaller profit. Thus striped cloth of the kind sold in Bida for 2s. 6d. is produced by the village artisan for 2s., allowing a profit of 9d. instead of 1s. 2d. On the other hand, the work and material of the village weavers are known to be inferior to that of the Bida craftsmen. The village weavers frankly admit it. They use the cruder indigenous dye instead of European dyes, they gin their own cotton and work with this inferior cotton-thread which breaks frequently during the weaving. They take ten days for the weaving of a piece of cloth which the Bida craftsmen finish in five. But just because they limit themselves to this cheaper and cruder material and cater exclusively for the less wealthy customers, they can stand the competition of European cloth better than the Bida weavers, who have specialized in more ambitious and expensive work. Here are the comparative prices: a striped cloth of European (or Japanese) manufacture is sold in Bida for 5s., as against 4s. 6d. for Bida-woven cloth and 1s. 3d. for cloth produced in the village.

Formerly, when the *efako* system in weaving was still capable of supporting a whole family, the younger members of the *efako* group practiced a little farm-work as *bued*. The family head did not join in this additional work and often, if he was an old man, he did not even take part in actual weaving. His income was supplemented by training

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1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942

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AN OLD POTTER WOMAN



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THE WOMEN'S LOOM

[facing p. 296]

INDUSTRIES, CRAFTS, AND PROFESSIONS.

467 Industries and crafts are practised for the most part by men in their homes or in attached workshops. Some involve co-operative group production, for which the labour unit is an *efakó*, corresponding to the *efakó* for farm work (p. 26). In most cases such work is supplemented by individual (*bucá*) work. Slave labour was formerly employed. Production is organized in guilds controlled by a guild-head, and thus considerable control is exercised, through the political system, over all the more important industries of the country.

Craft guilds control the mining and smelting of ores, iron-working, brass-working, and silver-smithing, glass making, weaving, bead-work, building, wood-work and carpentry, and butchery. Individual crafts are tailoring and embroidery, leather-work, indigo-dyeing, straw-hat making, mat and bag making, basket-work, rope and twine making. Cloth, mats, bags, rope, and twine are commonly made in many villages, though they appear for sale only in the larger markets. Free professions include barber-doctors, drummers and musicians, and dancers and singers (men and women).³¹

467 Iron-ore workers are called *edudaculi*. The mines are on the slopes of the low, 325 flat-topped hills and consist of shallow pits; the smelting furnaces are close by. A large proportion of the iron now used in smithing is bought in bars from European firms, but native-smelted iron is considered superior as it is said to be stronger and more durable. It is regularly used for the blacksmiths' own tools.³²

467 Blacksmiths are called *tsuata* or *tsuata gbagba*. There are one or two work- 326 shops in every village, and three "wards" of smiths in Bida. The guild-head lives in Bida and his control extends in certain respects over the whole country. It is a [463] "closed" craft. The forge is generally in a separate hut at some distance from the compound. There are usually three or four workers, who are related, in a unit. The work is mainly *efakó* but there is some *bucá* work, consisting mainly of repairs to hoes, etc. The main products are blades for hoes, bush knives (though these are now mostly bought from the European trading stores), large nails and hooks for building, and the small brackets used in canoe making; blacksmiths also make some of their own tools, hammers, etc. Charcoal required for the furnaces is produced at intervals in quantities by two or three men of one workshop. The early rains are the smiths' busy season.

There are a number of blacksmiths in Basa-Nge District who sell their wares in the Igala markets.³³

Brass- and silver-smiths work almost exclusively in Bida town where the furnace is often in the entrance-but of the compound. The materials are obtained by melting down pennies (for "copper"), rifle cartridges and rods (for brass), and silver coins. The main products are brass and copper sword-hilts, daggers, horse-trappings, bowls, jugs, trays, ladles, and receptacles; brass, aluminium, and silver bangles, rings, hair-pins, and chains; signet-rings are made by a crude *cire-perdue* method. Some work is designed specifically for European buyers. The work is largely individual, but there is a system of apprenticeship.³⁴

467 Weavers, known as *ede'ucili*, are found in three guild sections in the three parts 286 of Bida town. Most of them are Nupeized Yoruba. The looms are of the narrow horizontal treadle type producing cloth in strips 5 ins. wide, and of a standard length, approximately 10 yds. They are set up in a row in a half-open shed in the courtyard. The thread is now mostly of European manufacture, native-ginned and dyed cotton being rarely used. Members of the same household occupy a common workshop, but the work is mainly individual (*bucá*). A broad upright loom is used

³¹ Nadel, 1942, pp. 257-9, 293-4, 299; Line, 1947.

³² Nadel, op. cit., pp. 259-60.

³³ Nadel, loc. cit.; Hopkins, 1934.

³⁴ Nadel, op. cit., pp. 269-74.

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296 by women mostly among the Bida upper classes.²⁵ Their work is not organized in a guild.

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Beadworkers are known as *lantana* and their craft, a luxury industry, consists of the "refining" of crude beads bought from Hausa and Arab traders; it is carried out in the entrance-hut of the compound and is entirely individual. The majority of the workers are paid at piece-rates, one of them acting as contractor, and the chain of finished beads is traded by his wife. This industry is being extinguished by imports of European beads.²⁶

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Glass-makers (masaga) claim to have originated in Egypt. Members of the guild are Moslems. The head (*tura*) is elected by popular vote. They have the most strongly organized and conspicuously self-contained of the Nupe craft guilds and there is a regular system of apprenticeship. This craft is mainly concentrated in Bida town. Black glass (*bihini*) is made, but this is being largely replaced by coloured glass (*awalaba*) obtained by melting down bottles which have been bought by women traders. The native glass is made in one workshop, while fabrication is completed in others. Glass-workers have their market in their own quarter. Their main products are brightly coloured beads and bangles. Unlike other craftsmen, glass-workers undertake no agricultural work. There is no *bucá* work, all work being *efakó* with small wages.²⁷

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Tailoring and embroidery are individual crafts and members of the same household may belong to different professions. Tailors, including machine tailors, sometimes visit surrounding villages on their market days to find work. Their main products are caps, plain and embroidered gowns, trousers, and saddle-cloths. Their embroidered gowns are famous all over Nigeria.

Straw-hat makers use a "shape" of clay or wood and the crown of the hat is sometimes partly covered with leather. This is considered a "lazy" occupation, but a few craftsmen who have been taught European designs are well-to-do.

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Mat-makers of certain villages, e.g., Kutigi, are famous, and make oval or square, multi-coloured grass mats. The Basa-Nge of Igala Division make baskets and mats.

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Leather-workers formerly supplied a large part of the military equipment of the Nupe army—saddlery, leather shields, sword sheaths, quivers for arrows, etc. They work mainly in Bida town.²⁸

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Barber-doctors cut hair for men, women, and children; shave the head and cut the tribal marks of new-born babies at the naming ceremony and cut toe and finger nails. Individuals specialize in tattooing, medicines for diseases, contraceptives, cures for barrenness, treatment of lunacy, inhalants (*turare*), and minor operations such as circumcision and blood-letting. Hausa barbers remove the uvula of children.

Bida barbers, who are busy and prosperous, do not farm and their sons always become barbers, but this is not a "closed" craft. The length of apprenticeship varies. The most highly paid jobs are regarded by the family group as *efakó*, other jobs as *bucá*. There is a three-fold guild organization in Bida, corresponding to the territories of the three royal houses. Contributions from all *efakó* income are paid to the guild-head, who administers the guild fund, deducting money for common expenses and paying the rest in full to each member of the guild in turn.

There are also "medicine-men," whose craft is based on magical ideas and closely connected with divining and the Nupe religious system.²⁹

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Drummers and dancers, organized in mainly hereditary guilds, but with a system of apprenticeship, are found in all villages. Drumming may be recreational, for ceremony and ritual or ancillary to, agricultural production (e.g., farming *egbe*). In

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 275-62.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 282-3.

²⁷ Nadel, op. cit., pp. 274-5; 1940b, pp. 63-6, Robertson, 1935.

²⁸ Nadel, 1942, pp. 286-90; Line, 1947; Hopkins, 1934.

²⁹ Nadel, op. cit., pp. 298-301, and see below, pp. 46-7.

467 the villages drumming is mainly a side-line to farming. Drummers in Bida form
533 small bands or companies, the origins of which, and the type of their performance,
535 vary. Both men and women perform and women sing. Members of a single group
may come from different families. There are no *efako* arrangements. Such a band
may be in a *bara* (client) relationship to a nobleman. The various bands or com-
panies do not co-operate. The drums are made by wood-workers on the river.²²

464 Western crafts are practised for wages in the workshops of the N.A. Public
Works Dept. These craftsmen include blacksmiths, mechanics, carpenters, and
bricklayers. Temporary unskilled labour is employed mainly in occasional work
demanding a large body of unskilled labour, such as construction work of various
kinds. Most of these labourers go home and return to their permanent work at the
end of their temporary employment. Those who are farmers seek temporary
employment during the dry season only, to supplement the normal source of
income.²³

Women's crafts

323 Pottery is practised individually. Jebba Island, Baro, Badeggi, and Bida are
462 famous for their pottery and there is a regular trade in both potters' clay and pots.
The main products are small water jugs and large water containers. Clay is pre-
pared from swamps at Gbako River, at Badeggi, and sold by the villagers. It is
tempered with powdered potsherd or brick. The building of the pots is individual
work, but firing is undertaken collectively. Pots are simply fired, then given a brown
wash or blackened with a concoction of shea-nut bark.

462 Shea-butter manufacture is carried out by women, but the roasting ovens are
532 built by men.

386 Indigo-dyeing is practised only by a few *Koni* groups, where the men are
weavers and the women dyers. The indigo-grass and the indigo-tree are cultivated
by men, but where the indigo is picked and prepared from wild growing grass, the
work is done by women. The dye-pot platforms are made by women; the dyeing
is carried out individually. There are a few groups of male dyers (e.g., in Mokwa),
who use a rather different technique from that employed by the women.

586 Women's weaving is done on upright looms 21 ins. broad, which may be of
Yoruba origin. Among the Basa-Nge, older women weave patterned raffia.
Fishing-nets in Kede are made by old men and women from *rama* fibre.²⁴

41 Weapons and tools include spears, bows and poisoned arrows used by the more
remote groups, and knives with blades 8 to 10 ins. long. A few men use flint-locks,
and formerly a whole section of the Nupe army was equipped with guns.

501 Dug-out canoes are used by the Bataci as well as the Kyedye. Those of the
latter are large and square with caulked top strakes. They are mostly obtained
from Onitsha and the lower Benue.

534 Musical instruments include a central-hole flute (the blow-hole is midway
643 between the ends of the tube), pipes, clarinets (of Hausa origin), various drums and
rattles, long bronze trumpets (forming part of the royal insignia), and, in some
areas, bull-roarers and animal horns.

532 Gobi figures are statues of different origins. Two bronze figures stand unpro-
778 tected in the centre of the village of Jebba Island near a dilapidated hut which is
said to have been formerly a temple. There are seven figures at Tada village which
are kept in a round hut and carefully tended; some of these are human figures and
some animal and they appear to be of diverse origins, but are regarded traditionally
as having been left by Tsoede on his flight up the Niger.²⁵

²² Nadai, *op cit.*, pp. 301-3. For an outline of the *bara* system see below p. 35.

²³ Nadai, *op cit.*, pp. 304-8.

²⁴ Nadai, *op cit.*, pp. 235, 239-7; Hopkins, 1934; Notes on Kede District, 1950.

²⁵ Temple, 1919, pp. 114, 117, 198, 332; Meek, 1925, vol. I, p. 108; Walker, 1934; see also Palmer, 1931.

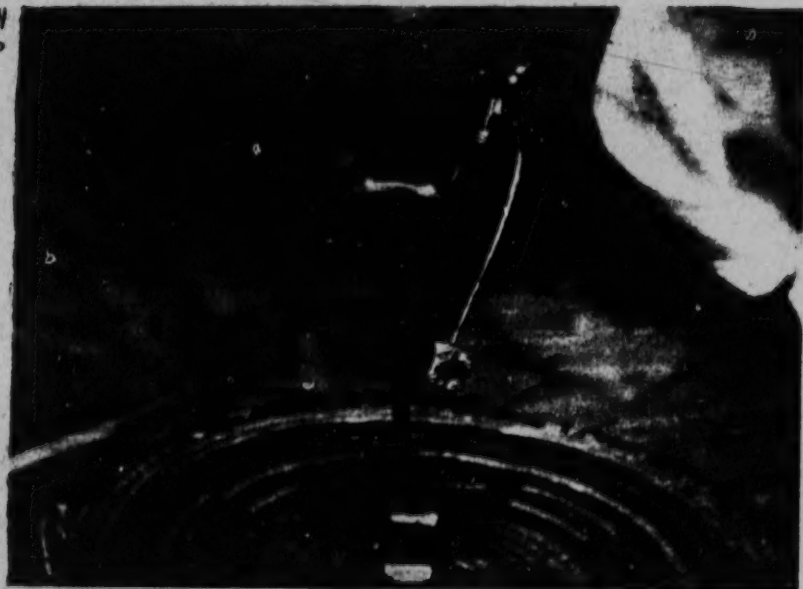
6: Anonymous U-4 (no date) 1956

"King of the dancers" - A Bida
brass splaining Toy.

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Bida

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The guilds of craftsmen in iron, leather, and embroidery made the weapons, armour, saddle-cloths and accoutrements for the army, the agricultural workers produced food and the glass-makers produced the ornaments which formed a basis of trade when that seemed more worth while than a military operation. As is usual in a state drawing most of its profits from war and plunder, there grew in Bida a great demand for luxuries—ornamental vessels, beads and armlets, especially among the women. Many young men of Bida state, ruefully, that this taste lingers on.

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This guild system was too rigid easily to withstand fundamental changes. The blacksmiths, declining in number, now confine themselves to farm implements and a few furnishings for horsemen. The brass makers turn out a wide range of flat and hollow-ware, much of it coming loosely within the luxury classification. The embroiderers turn out fine hand work on gowns and there is a beautifully decorated, bright red cloth woven by the women; but few are sold outside the town. Makers of hats and mats turn out a range of products now largely aimed at a Europeanised market.

• [384]

This falling-off of the traditional demand and an (at least) partial failure to find adequate new markets has already resulted in the loss of some skills and is a grave risk to the perpetuation of many others.

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The glass-makers, however, still work in their traditional way. The furnace is made from a clay pot heavily embedded in more clay. Into the base of the furnace are let two clay pipes of about two inches external diameter. These swell out to become bellows chambers some twelve or fifteen inches across closed by leather bags. One pumps away at them

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